

AP[®] EUROPEAN HISTORY

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Question 3

Considering the period 1953 to 1991, analyze the problems within the Soviet Union that contributed to the eventual collapse of the Soviet system.

8–9 Points

- Thesis explicitly identifies and defines the problems *within* the Soviet Union in the period 1953-91 that contributed to the collapse of the Soviet system.
- Essay is clearly organized, consistently followed, and effective in support of the argument regarding the problems within the Soviet Union that led to the collapse of the Soviet system.
- Essay is balanced, analyzing at least TWO major problems *within* the Soviet Union AND how and why such problems led to the collapse of the Soviet system; essay takes into account the chronological parameters required by the question.
- At least TWO major problems *within* the Soviet Union that led to the collapse of the Soviet system are supported with multiple pieces of relevant evidence.
- May contain errors that do not detract from the argument.

6–7 Points

- Thesis is explicit and responsive to the question but may not fully define the problems *within* the Soviet Union that contributed to the collapse of the Soviet system.
- Essay is adequately organized, supportive of the argument, but may on occasion stray off task in terms of the prompts of the question (analysis, problems *within* the Soviet Union, linkage of such problems to the collapse of the Soviet system, coverage of the period 1953-91).
- Essay analyzes at least TWO major problems *within* the Soviet Union AND how and why such problems led to the collapse of the Soviet system but not in equal depth; essay may concentrate on the post-1985 period but suggests at least some awareness of the broader chronology required by the question.
- At least TWO major problems *within* the Soviet Union that led to the collapse of the Soviet system are supported by at least ONE piece of relevant evidence each.
- May contain one error that detracts from the argument.

4–5 Points

- Thesis explicitly addresses the question but may provide no development of its arguments.
- Essay is organized but may not always address the requirements of the question (analysis, the period 1953-91, problems *within* the Soviet Union, linkage to the collapse of the Soviet system).
- Essay shows some imbalance; some of the major topics suggested by the prompt may be neglected: (1) may only provide effective analysis for only one problem *within* the Soviet Union that led to the collapse of the Soviet system; (2) may describe MULTIPLE problems *within* the Soviet Union that led to the collapse of the Soviet system; (3) may focus exclusively on the period after 1985.
- At least ONE of the problems *within* the Soviet Union is supported by at least one piece of relevant evidence.
- May contain more than one error that detracts from the argument.

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Question 3 (continued)

2–3 Points

- Contains no explicit thesis OR the thesis provided may be irrelevant OR inaccurate OR is simply a paraphrase of the question.
- Essay lacks organization and may wander off task repeatedly; fails to respond effectively to the question by focusing on the Cold War OR Soviet relations with its Eastern European satellites OR Russian and/or Soviet history before and/or after the time period 1953-91.
- Essay shows serious imbalance, because most major topics suggested by the prompt are neglected (may simply describe problems, either within or outside the Soviet Union, may provide no linkage between the problems within the Soviet Union and the collapse of the Soviet system, may demonstrate no knowledge of the chronology).
- Most assertions may be generalized OR rarely supported by relevant evidence.
- May contain several errors that detract from the argument.

0–1 Point

- Essay lacks any discernable thesis OR is simply a paraphrase of the question OR an irrelevant AND inaccurate thesis.
- Disorganized response suggests little or no understanding of the question.
- Essay may be polemical rather than analytical OR may not attempt to discuss problems and/or collapse in any effective way OR shows no knowledge of the proper chronology.
- Offers little or no supporting evidence.
- May contain numerous errors of interpretation and/or fact that detract from the argument.

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Question 3 Historical Background

Material in this section is derived from the following texts:

Hunt et al., *The Making of the West* (2nd edition, 2005)

Kagan et al., *The Western Heritage* (8th edition, 2004)

McKay, *A History of Western Society* (8th AP edition, 2006)

Palmer, Colton, and Kramer, *A History of the Modern World* (9th edition, 2002)

Spielvogel, *Western Civilization* (5th edition, 2003)

In addition, textbooks by Coffin and Stacey, Hollister, Levack, Hause and Maltby, and King and Chambers were scanned. They do not appear to provide anything that cannot be found in the textbooks listed above.

CENTRAL TOPICS

Late Stalinism (1945-53)

All of the textbooks offer some discussion of the Soviet regime's foreign and domestic policies between the end of the World War II and Stalin's death, with Palmer providing the most thorough treatment. Most texts take note of the tremendous devastation experienced by the USSR as a result of World War II, although no consensus exists regarding the extent of the damage, especially when noting the loss of life (generally placed at between 20 million and 25 million dead.) Some textbooks indicate that the Soviet population hoped the Soviet regime would reward the public's heroic efforts during the war with greater freedom and more consumer goods. Hunt notes that some peasants expected an end to collectivization, while Kagan indicates that public expectations included less repression and more consumer goods. Stalin, however, moved quickly to reassert control over society and the economy. Palmer emphasizes the growth of the Gulag during and after World War II, describing "tighter ideological restrictions" and xenophobia. McKay also speaks of purges and "cultural conformity" and the emphasis on heavy industry and the military to the relative neglect of consumer goods, agriculture, and housing. Spielvogel likens Stalin's postwar policies to those of the 1930s, writing of growing political and cultural repression, as well as the focus on heavy industry and the military, with low levels of consumption and continued housing shortages. Kagan writes that with recovery and reassertion of authority as his principal objectives Stalin continued purges until his death in 1953. Hunt, while not denying that Stalin emphasized economic recovery and greater collectivization, also describes the creation of a welfare state, with the regime offering child care, family allowances, and maternity benefits, as well as modest national health care. All of the textbooks describe Stalin's imposition of Communist regimes in Eastern Europe between 1945 and 1948, linking the process to the Cold War. The Eastern European satellites adopted, to varying degrees, Soviet economic, social, and political policies in the years after World War II.

Nikita Khrushchev and De-Stalinization (1953-64)

Stalin died in 1953, leaving a distinctive legacy to his successors. Palmer identifies industrialization, victory in World War II, expansion into Eastern Europe, and the establishment as a military and nuclear superpower, pointing out that such an achievement came with "a heavy human cost." Initially a collective leadership, the regime was eventually led by Nikita Khrushchev, although the books offer different dates for his unquestioned domination of his colleagues. Despite his background, Khrushchev eventually challenged aspects of the Stalinist legacy. Palmer characterizes the Khrushchev era as an "abortive effort at reform," and McKay states that the party leadership acknowledged the need for reform and that de-Stalinization was "genuine." Kagan characterizes Khrushchev's policies as a "retreat from Stalinism but

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Question 3 Historical Background (continued)

not authoritarianism,” whereas Hunt notes that cultural freedom was “erratic and uneven,” although Khrushchev is viewed as more sympathetic to urban and rural complaints. All of the books mention Khrushchev’s denunciation of some aspects of Stalinism in his “Secret Speech” delivered before the Twentieth Party Congress in 1956, even if certain terms (“cult of personality,” “Secret Speech,” “thaw,” and “Twentieth Party Congress”) do not appear in every textbook. The books also vary in their coverage of the Khrushchev reforms. Some of the authors indicate that under Khrushchev the prison system known as the Gulag began to release its prisoners (Spielvogel, Hunt). Agricultural reform is treated most thoroughly by Palmer, who uses the term “virgin lands” in Central Asia and judges Khrushchev a failure because he did not alter the bureaucratic system of collectivization. Spielvogel and Kagan offer less detail: Spielvogel writes of failed efforts to grow more corn and the cultivation of lands east of the Urals, while Kagan indicates greater grain cultivation but “ultimate failure” and the need to import grain from abroad. He credits Khrushchev with the removal of some restrictions on private cultivation but offers no details. McKay limits his remarks to greater spending on agriculture, while Hunt merely notes greater spending by the state on consumer goods. All of the textbooks mention the unrest in Eastern Europe that followed the “Secret Speech” and the differences in the Soviet responses to Poland and Hungary. Treatment of Khrushchev’s administrative and party reforms tends to be sketchy and not very developed. Spielvogel refers to attempts by Khrushchev to limit the privileges of the party elite and links such efforts at least in part to the fall from power in 1964; Kagan speaks of limited economic decentralization but offers no details; McKay notes that Khrushchev “shook up” the party and added new members. Hunt indicates that the courts operated in a less repressive manner with some limits placed on the secret police. Palmer also writes of “restraints” on the secret police; he is more precise in identifying economic decentralization and adds that some central planning ministries were moved from Moscow, with their authority granted to regional economic councils. Regarding the party, he credits Khrushchev with an unsuccessful effort to introduce term limits for some party posts, an effort defeated by the concerted opposition of government and party bureaucrats. All of the textbooks discuss the greater degree of cultural freedom known as the “thaw,” although not all authors use the term. Four of the authors address the issue of inconsistency in cultural policy by comparing the regime’s treatment of Boris Pasternak and Alexander Solzhenitsyn; the exception is Spielvogel, who only refers to the publication of Solzhenitsyn’s *One Day in the Life of Ivan Denisovich* in 1962. Miscalculations in foreign policy along with failed domestic policies and attacks on the privileges of the *apparatchiks* ultimately contributed to the removal of Khrushchev by his colleagues in 1964.

The Brezhnev–Andropov–Chernenko Era (1964-85)

Palmer indicates that the new Soviet leadership intended to rebuild Soviet military strength at all costs without much regard to the impact of such a policy on the Soviet economy. Ultimately, the regime pursued détente with the United States in the 1970s in part to gain access to Western aid in order to deal with the economic problems caused by the arms race. That assistance took the form of technology, credits, and grain. Brezhnev displayed no tolerance for any deviation in Eastern Europe; in 1968 Soviet and Warsaw Pact forces crushed Czechoslovakia’s “Prague Spring,” justifying intervention by the so-called Brezhnev Doctrine. The Soviet leadership felt confident enough of its authority to sign the Helsinki Accords in 1975, despite its pledges to respect human rights. Palmer indicates that the pledge would encourage Soviet dissenters to challenge repression within the USSR. Ultimately more serious was the decision in 1979 to prop up a neighboring Communist regime in Afghanistan, which plunged the Soviet Union into a prolonged war that the text likens to Vietnam. By the 1980s, the country was in deep trouble, a reality acknowledged even by the leadership who in desperation selected Mikhail Gorbachev leader of the Soviet state.

McKay claims that Brezhnev pledged to maintain the status quo and rejected the previous campaign of de-Stalinization. “Re-Stalinization” took place under a collective rather than an individual dictatorship;

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coercion replaced terror. Dissidents were generally blacklisted rather than executed. Soviet citizens experienced a gradual improvement in the standard of living despite continuing shortages of basic commodities. Brezhnev also took care to preserve the privileges enjoyed by the party elite. The party increasingly identified itself with Russian nationalism, fearful of possible demands for greater autonomy or even independence from Eastern Europe and the ethnic minorities living within the Soviet Union. The text mentions the arms buildup of the 1960s without Palmer’s assessment of the impact of such a policy on the Soviet economy. A tight grip was maintained on Eastern Europe (the text mentions the invasion of Czechoslovakia in 1968 and the Brezhnev Doctrine) and the Helsinki Accords’ pledges on human rights were ignored. The troublesome critic Alexander Solzhenitsyn was expelled from the Soviet Union and went into exile. To many observers, the Soviet Union of the 1970s appeared a stable society. McKay takes note of the “social revolution” that occurred during the Brezhnev era—the continued urbanization of the country, the growth of educated experts who desired greater intellectual freedom and the emergence of a “civil society” that began debating “nonpolitical” issues. At the time of Brezhnev’s death in 1982, the new Soviet leader, Yuri Andropov, recognized the existence of some social problems (the text mentions the apathy among the masses), but the Communist party appeared solidly in control. The decision to invade Afghanistan in 1979, however, served to rekindle the Cold War.

Spielvogel cites Brezhnev’s pledge of “no experimentation” as evidence of a party leadership that intended to promote stability. The regime stamped heavily on dissent (the text mentions Czechoslovakia in 1968 and the punishment of Andrei Sakharov). Spielvogel points out that Brezhnev continued the emphasis on heavy industry, a policy that eventually resulted in the gradual decline of economic growth. He concludes that centralized planning put in place a bureaucracy that “discouraged efficiency and reduced productivity.” The economic system of guaranteed employment and the absence of incentives produced “apathy, complacency, absenteeism, drunkenness” among the workers. The ruling order was based on patronage, which led to “inefficiency and corruption.” The nation’s inability to feed itself was concealed by purchases of grain from the United States. Spielvogel says little about the Helsinki Accords except that the Soviets signed despite its pledge to respect human rights. The invasion of Afghanistan in 1979 is likened to Vietnam in its effect on the USSR. By 1980, the declining economy, rising mortality rates, a surge in alcoholism, and loss of belief in the system had created demands for reform *within* the party.

Kagan describes the Brezhnev domestic policies as a return to Stalinism. He emphasizes greater repression (the expulsion of Alexander Solzhenitsyn in 1974) but also shows awareness of the emergence of a dissident movement (Andrei Sakharov and the calls to respect the Helsinki Accords). Nevertheless, the emphasis is on repression (harassment of Soviet Jews, use of psychiatric hospitals against dissidents and house arrest). The party is described as becoming more rigid and corrupt, demoralizing younger members of the party about to enter the Soviet bureaucracies. By the early 1980s, the Soviet Union had reached nuclear parity with the United States, but the regime was faced with a variety of foreign policy problems. The Soviet invasion of Afghanistan in 1979 (likened to Vietnam) demoralized the USSR; Eastern Europe was restive (Solidarity and the declaration of martial law in Poland in 1981); and the arms buildup undertaken by the Reagan administration (SDI is specifically mentioned) created formidable challenges. Kagan concludes that the American military buildup contributed to Soviet economic problems by forcing the Soviets to increase their military spending and thus helped bring about its collapse.

Hunt views the Soviet difficulties after Khrushchev as part of a global competition that challenged the legitimacy of the Soviet system. A rigid bureaucracy hindered Soviet scientific research, and the Soviet public by the 1970s showed increasing interest in the world beyond Soviet Russia (as measured by their television viewing habits). The regime is depicted as initially favoring reform, as evident in greater emphasis on the production of consumer goods (televisions, household appliances, cheap housing) and the efforts to encourage plant managers to earn a profit. In addition, cultural and scientific contacts with the West were easier. Repression returned, however, in the late 1960s and early 1970s (the invasion of

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Czechoslovakia and the Brezhnev Doctrine in 1968, the expulsion of Alexander Solzhenitsyn in 1974, the use of psychiatric hospitals as prisons for dissidents, various forms of discrimination against Soviet Jews). Nevertheless, one of the consequences of the repressive measures was the growth of a dissident movement (*samizdat* culture.) At the end of the 1970s, the Soviet Union became involved in a costly war in Afghanistan. By the early 1980s, the Soviet Union faced a series of profound problems. Hunt identifies a deteriorating economy, corrupt political and economic management, a declining standard of living as evidenced by housing and food shortages, and increasing alcoholism that affected productivity and morale. Efforts to reform the system occurred at a time of growing protests by workers, artists, and intellectuals; instead of stabilizing the system, reform created greater rebellion.

Mikhail Gorbachev and the End of the Soviet Union (1985-91)

Palmer characterizes the collapse of the Soviet Union and Soviet rule in Central and Eastern Europe as an “implosion” with relatively little violence in Eastern Europe, with the exception of Romania. Gorbachev introduced a series of reforms that were intended to save Communism by reform. *Perestroika* is described as a “cautious” approach that was designed to eliminate restraints on the economy in order to address consumer demands. Gorbachev hoped to raise productivity, and improve the quality of goods by decentralization, extending self-management to economic enterprises, removing bureaucratic control over production, and providing incentives for greater productivity. In agriculture, he offered a limited transfer of land to entrepreneurs. Unfortunately, the economic problems of the nation intensified, as even these modest steps encountered considerable opposition from entrenched interests. In the end, most economic reforms existed only on paper. *Glasnost* was designed to allow Soviet citizens greater freedom in their investigations of Soviet society and history. The process ended the Communist party’s monopoly on power, as censorship gradually disappeared. Soviet citizens now learned the truth about poor harvests, inefficient state enterprises, and the Chernobyl accident. Gorbachev freed Andrei Sakharov from house arrest, permitted emigration by Soviet Jews, and took a more tolerant attitude toward religion. Once again, Stalin’s legacy came under criticism. Democratization followed, and Soviet citizens elected a Congress of People’s Deputies in 1989. In 1990, Gorbachev was elected president of the USSR by the Congress. By the late 1980s, however, the absence of economic progress resulted in growing criticism of Gorbachev for his failure to undertake a more radical reform program. Looser controls also led to nationalist upheaval in Eastern Europe and within the Soviet Union. In the satellite countries, long-time party oppression, the absence of a “civil society,” economic stagnation, environmental degradation, and debts to Western banks eventually resulted in a relatively nonviolent transfer of power in 1989 (Romania is identified as the exception to this pattern). Within the Soviet Union, greater freedom resulted in what Palmer identifies as “long-suppressed” ethnic rivalries (Georgia, the Baltic republics, and Azerbaijan versus Armenia are specifically mentioned). As the economic situation worsened and as the Baltic republics threatened secession, Gorbachev temporarily shelved reform (the 500 Days economic plan and pressure on Lithuania are mentioned). Democratic reformers viewed such measures with alarm and increasingly turned to other political leaders. Boris Yeltsin, expelled from the Communist leadership in 1987, was elected president of Russia in 1991. Hard-liners, faced with the possible breakup of the Soviet Union, attempted to seize power in a failed coup in August 1991. Eventually, leaders of some of the republics agreed to create a loose federation, the Commonwealth of Independent States (CIS). Gorbachev, who is called “crucial in the destruction of the Soviet system,” resigned in December 1991.

McKay argues that the Gorbachev reforms contributed to the collapse of the Soviet Union, despite the fact that destruction of the system was not Gorbachev’s intention. Gorbachev gained office as the economy worsened in the mid-1980s. Initially, he attacked corruption and incompetence within the bureaucracy and alcoholism in society, although the text does not offer any specific examples. *Perestroika*, which the text describes as “timid,” meant the abandonment of some price controls, greater independence for state enterprises, and the establishment of some profit-seeking cooperatives. *Glasnost*, viewed as “bold and far-

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reaching,” led to a reduction of censorship and renewed criticism of Stalin. Finally, democratization resulted in an attack on corruption within the Communist party and free elections in 1989 for the Congress of People’s Deputies. One consequence of democratization was increased demands for autonomy and/or independence (Georgia in 1989). Revolutions in Eastern Europe in 1989, which began with Solidarity and Poland, ended Communist rule in most of Eastern Europe in a relatively peaceful manner (Romania is identified as the exception). By 1990, some of the non-Russian republics within the Soviet Union demanded independence (Lithuania is mentioned). Gorbachev, who had been chosen president, experienced continuing erosion of his authority and proved reluctant to risk full elections. He faced criticism from those who felt he was proceeding too slowly (Boris Yeltsin) and hard-liners, who executed a futile coup in August 1991 in order to save the Soviet Union. The USSR, which ended in December, ultimately lost the “will and the means to be a superpower.”

Spielvogel states that Gorbachev came to power in 1985, succeeding an ailing leadership. The clear decline in the standard of living was evident in the growing technological gap between the Soviet Union and the West (computers are specifically identified). *Perestroika* involved a reordering of economic policy, offering limited free enterprise and some opportunities for the ownership of private property. The limited progress persuaded Gorbachev to expand his reform program to include changes in the social and political order of the country. *Glasnost* encouraged a frank and open discussion of problems within the Soviet system. Political reform permitted non-Communist groups to compete in the 1989 elections for the Congress of People’s deputies. In 1990, Gorbachev was elected president of the Soviet Union. Confronted with revolutions in Eastern Europe in 1989, Gorbachev chose not to interfere with the removal of Communist regimes. More seriously, the period 1988-90 witnessed the emergence of nationalist movements and ethnic violence within the Soviet Union (Georgia in 1988, Lithuanian independence in 1990). Spielvogel notes that the USSR contained 92 nationalities and 112 recognized languages. As the regime tottered, Gorbachev struggled with opposition from the new democratic forces led by Boris Yeltsin and the “old guard,” who opposed reform. The 1991 August coup carried out by conservative forces within the KGB, military, party, and government failed and accelerated the collapse. Ukraine declared independence later that year; eventually Russia, Ukraine, and Belarus proclaimed the creation of a voluntary federation, the Commonwealth of Independent States (CIS).

Kagan defines the collapse of the USSR as an “implosion.” A variety of problems (economic stagnation, party corruption, the war in Afghanistan) weakened Soviet authority, but “what brought those forces to a head and began the dramatic collapse of the Soviet Empire was the accession to power of Mikhail Gorbachev in 1985.” Attempts at reform released forces that ultimately destroyed the Soviet Empire. Gorbachev took office confident that the Soviet system could be reformed, but his reforms released social forces he proved unable to control. *Perestroika* was introduced in order to revive the economy and raise the standard of living. The size and authority of centralized economic ministries was reduced, better wages and greater liberties were promised (Kagan mentions the 1989 coal miners’ strike in Siberia), and in 1990, Gorbachev advocated recognition of the principle of ownership of private property and “liberalization” of the economy. The modesty of early attempts at economic reform pushed Gorbachev to endorse more radical political reforms. *Glasnost* reduced the level of censorship and encouraged an open discussion of Soviet history and institutions. Democratization resulted in relatively free elections in 1989 to the Congress of People’s Deputies and the eventual selection of Gorbachev as president. In the face of the 1989 revolutions in Eastern Europe, Gorbachev refused to interfere militarily as the former satellites moved toward independence. The most devastating problem faced by the Soviet regime between 1986 and 1991, however, proved to be the nationalities question within the Soviet Union. Ethnic violence erupted (Georgia in 1989, Azerbaijan and Lithuania in 1990, the Central Asian republics of Azerbaijan and Tajikistan in 1990-91). As Gorbachev reduced the size of the Soviet military, some of the Soviet republics began to establish their own military forces. Resistance to conscription by some republics provided further evidence of growing opposition to central Soviet authority. As the Communist party abandoned its monopoly on

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power, Gorbachev faced criticism from the “old guard,” which fought to preserve the structures of the Soviet system; democratic forces led by politicians like Boris Yeltsin, who demanded an acceleration of efforts to establish democratic institutions and a market economy; and regional unrest as the Baltic republics pushed in the direction of independence. The effort by hard-liners in August 1991 to halt changes in the constitutional arrangement failed, and the Soviet Union ceased to exist in December 1991.

Hunt credits Gorbachev with recognition of the country’s problems. His aim was reform not the elimination of socialism. By the mid-1980s, the Soviet Union suffered from low fertility rates; massive grain imports, because 20 to 30 percent of Soviet grain rotted in the fields, owing to the inefficient state-directed economy; industrial pollution; a huge bureaucracy that prevented innovation and failed to produce a decent standard of living; staggering military spending that at 15 to 20 percent of GNP reduced the availability of resources for consumer goods; and a cynical younger generation with no memory of Stalin or World War II. Hunt places these problems within the context of the 1960s, an era that saw criticism of certain features of postindustrial society—the concentration of bureaucratic power, environmental degradation that resulted from an emphasis on industrialization, and social inequality. Neither the Soviet Union nor the satellites ever addressed these concerns. *Perestroika* sought to raise the standard of living by promoting productivity, greater investment in modern technology and encouraging some market reforms like prices and profits. *Glasnost*, stirred in large part by the mishandling of the 1986 Chernobyl nuclear accident, led to criticism of party officials, existing social problems, and, ultimately, the Soviet past. In local elections held in Moscow in 1989, not a single Communist was elected—a sign of the nation’s alienation from the regime. Gorbachev is credited for refusing to intervene militarily in the Eastern European revolutions of 1989 and with reducing Cold War tensions, withdrawing from Afghanistan, for instance, in 1989. By the end of the decade, nationality groups within the Soviet Union demanding political and/or cultural autonomy were increasingly challenging Soviet authority. Hunt compares such pressures with the difficulties experienced by the Habsburg Empire at the beginning of the twentieth century. The Soviet leadership was confronted by more than 100 ethnic groups and 50 million Muslims. Throughout its history, the Soviet Union had attempted to create a Russian and Soviet identity while still respecting some local cultural traditions, but the efforts failed. Furthermore, *perestroika* failed to halt the breakdown of the economy (inflation, unemployment, and shortages of basic commodities). The system collapsed in 1991 in the face of ethnic violence (Tajikistan, Armenia, Azerbaijan), secession (the Baltic republics’ declaration of independence), the election of Boris Yeltsin as president of Russia, and a bungled coup in August by hard-liners (the latter is blamed for accelerating the collapse). Twelve of the 15 republics proclaimed the creation of a new federation, the Commonwealth of Independent States (CIS), and the Soviet Union dissolved on January 1, 1992.

Write in the box the number of the question you are answering on this page as it is designated in the exam.

Part 3 #3

From 1953 to 1991, (the death of Stalin to the dissolution of the USSR) was a time plagued by great difficulties for the Soviet Union. These ~~are~~ problems proved too much for the Soviet Union to handle and eventually led to its collapse. Some of these problems were economic such as widespread corruption and mismanagement. Others were social, such as ethnic tensions and poor living standards. Other problems were strategic, the Soviet Union's hostile posture towards the West and neighbouring nations such as Afghanistan.

Though one of the world's only two superpowers, the USSR was remarkably underdeveloped. During the Gorbachev years in the eighties, corruption became rampant. Corruption was so widespread that Fidel Castro, the dictator of Cuba credits corruption with the destruction of the Soviet Union. Huge government projects that ended in utter failure posed another problem. In the sixties, General Secretary Khrushchev attempted to turn the vast lands of Siberia into wheat fields. The plan was so disastrous that it led to Soviet dependence on Western grain.

Part B #3

Write in the box the number of the question you are answering on this page as it is designated in the exam.

Shipments ~~crushed~~ ~~was~~ ~~broken~~ By the time Gorbachev assumed power, no one knew how bad the economic situation was since officials distorted output figures to make everything appear normal. Gorbachev was forced to ~~try to~~ make ~~over~~ deals with Western investors in order to save the country from recession. The Soviets also had a tendency to use vast sums of money on projects such as the exploration of space which diverted funds from infrastructure.

Social problems also plagued the Soviet Union. Non-Russian Soviets were treated as second-class citizens and after ~~Stalin~~ Stalin, all Soviet leaders were Russian. This led to increased ethnic tensions. Violence even erupted in some areas of the Caucasus where ethnic groups demanded sovereignty. Low living standards caused huge problems. The Soviet population lived in third world conditions in respect to health and income. ~~This~~ This created disillusionment with the Politburo's leadership.

The Soviet's aggressive posture towards Britain and the America led to the ~~best~~ pariah status the USSR received in the West. Hostility towards

Write in the box the number of the question you are answering on this page as it is designated in the exam.

Part B #3

The Western world led to a Western effort to delegitimize and undermine the USSR. U.S. President Reagan branded the USSR "the Evil Empire" leading to an arms race that would deplete Soviet treasuries. Soviet defeat in Afghanistan also created the impression that the USSR was a paper tiger. A superpower had been defeated by a poorly trained, ill equipped band of guerrillas. This was a significant blow to the Soviet reputation. The Baltic states which separated first obviously did not fear Soviet repercussions. The defeat in Afghanistan may explain for some of their boldness.

~~The Soviet~~ Many factors led to the collapse of the USSR. A mismanaged economy created a country severely short of funds. The social problems of ethnic tensions and low living standards created a disgruntled and disillusioned population. The hostility the Soviets displayed towards the West led to their pariah status while the defeat in Afghanistan made them Soviet tiger appear de-clawed.

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Write in the box the number of the question you are answering on this page as it is designated in the exam.

In the Soviet Union under Stalin, terror was a main aspect of society. With his random purges of the party, the Soviet Union was terrified into submission. With his death, a string of leaders followed, not making large-scale changes in society, except for Khrushchev. With Khrushchev's secret speech, the realities of the Stalinist era of Russia became known ~~at a nation~~ ^{and acknowledged} on a nation-wide scale. After this, with the shaken government left behind by Stalin, it was only a matter of giving the citizens enough rights to reform before they would. With the effects of the Cold War still on Russia, Gorbachev's policies of perestroika and glasnost gave the people enough freedom to protest.

~~In the~~ ^{In the} Soviet Union, when Gorbachev came to power, people were still suffering from a poor economy, lack of consumer goods, and bitter about Stalin's regime. Gorbachev implemented positive programs to try to relieve their terror and rebuild the economy (perestroika), also granting them rights such as freedom of speech and press (glasnost). With these changes, unrest was able to brew more strongly in the Soviet Union.

~~Finally~~ With the revolutions of some of the Soviet Union's satellite countries, such as Hungary's "velvet revolution", Gorbachev's power was weakened. He was able to let go of the satellites because they were not core to the Soviet Union, but his granting them independence so easily had some negative consequences. He lost support from his radical communist government officials. The revolutions also

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sparked revolts in important countries in the ~~Soviet~~ Soviet Union when Poland tried to gain independence. For example it was crucial that the revolution be stopped. This lowered his support levels from the liberals in Russia as well.

Not only this, but his compromises internationally were not rewarded. He maintained good relations with the west, but, with his country unstable, he couldn't receive loans necessary to restore the economy fully. With lack of full support from both the west and within his own government, it was only a matter of time before the Soviet Union fell.

Finally, when the communist officials in the government tried to overthrow Gorbachev for a more strictly communist government, Boris Yeltsin stepped in and took power. This decision on Yeltsin's part was key to establishing a new government system. With Yeltsin in power, the Soviet Union fell with its communist policies, and a new Russia became economically free.

With the rule of Stalin, the seeds of trouble were planted. Stalin gave the people a reason to revolt. Once Gorbachev gave them enough freedom to get together and get organized, the fall of the Soviet Union was inevitable.

Write in the box the number of the question you are answering on this page as it is designated in the exam.

Part B #3

The Soviet Union practiced communism which is all ~~people~~ people are equal in class of society and the government controls everything. Problems within the Soviet Union that contributed to the eventual collapse of the Soviet system are the secret police, unfair rights of the majority class to government officials, censorship, and military spending. All four of these problems led to a corrupt, unfair, poor Soviet Union that would collapse in 1991.

One problem of the Soviet system was the secret police. People feared to talk to one another because they were afraid someone would turn them in as a traitor for any reason. This made Soviet people scared of one another and there was always a fear on if someone said the wrong thing they would be taken away and killed. This contributed to the collapse by fear.

Another problem of the Soviet system was ~~the~~ through unfair rights of the people and government officials. Government officials could get anything they wanted right away. ~~They~~ Government officials made up 10% of the ~~the~~ Soviet population and the rest of the

Part B #3

Write in the box the number of the question you are answering on this page as it is designated in the exam.

90% was the majority of the people. Government officials would also get the best quality of food, clothing, tools, and anything. The majority of the people lived in bad conditions such as small apartments. They also would have to wait on a waiting list if they wanted something such as a car.

Another problem that led to the collapse of the Soviet Union was through the censorship of the newspaper, television, textbooks, and anything to do with the outside world. The Soviets did this because they did not want people to know how good other countries were because then they would want to leave or rise up and overthrow communism.

The final problem of the Soviet Union was military spending. The Soviets invested so much money into security, the arms race, and funding that many of their people were lacking things to live off of. The constant fear of the United States attacking made them put a lot of money into nuclear weapons and military advancement.

Write in the box the number of the question you are answering on this page as it is designated in the exam.

Part B #3

Four problems that led to the collapse of the Soviet Union were the secret police instilling fear on their people, unfair and corrupt government, censorship to better conditions and living style of non-communists, and military spending that deprived their people and led to ~~to~~ food shortages and harsh living conditions.

AP[®] EUROPEAN HISTORY 2007 SCORING COMMENTARY

Question 3

Overview

In this question, students were expected to examine the problems within the Soviet Union from the death of Stalin in 1953 to the demise of the Soviet state and the resignation of Mikhail Gorbachev at the end of 1991. The direction to “analyze” is a traditional mandate in AP European History and one that experienced AP teachers presumably taught their students. Unlike previous free-response questions on Eastern Europe that asked students to discuss some aspect of the Cold War or the relationship between the Soviet Union and its Eastern European satellites, this question expected them to focus their attention on problems *within* the Soviet Union and *link* those problems to the collapse of the Soviet system. Students could incorporate material about the Cold War and/or Eastern Europe, provided that linkage to the problems within the Soviet Union was part of the analysis. The question did not specify the types of problems to be analyzed (political, social, economic, or cultural), offering students a wide range of valid approaches. The prompt’s reference to the “collapse of the Soviet system” provided students with an opportunity to reflect on the concepts of “collapse” and “the Soviet system” individually; given the material in the textbooks, it is likely that most students interpreted the term “Soviet system” as standing for the Soviet state and/or empire, the Communist party, or the ideology of Communism. (The time frame of this question should also remind AP teachers that they have an obligation to cover the entire chronology as outlined in the Course Description.)

Sample: 3A

Score: 9

This essay contains a clear and explicit thesis regarding the problems within the Soviet Union that led to the collapse of the Soviet system (“widespread corruption and mismanagement,” “ethnic tensions,” “poor living standards,” and a “hostile posture towards the West”). It is clearly organized and effective in its support of the argument. The presentation is also well balanced, analyzing numerous internal major problems that led to the demise of the Soviet system—all upheld by multiple pieces of relevant evidence. The chronology is not entirely accurate, but this does not detract from the central contentions.

Sample: 3B

Score: 6

The thesis here is explicit and responds to the question, but problems within the Soviet Union are not fully defined (seeds of revolt planted by Stalin, the consequences of Gorbachev’s reforms) nor considered in much depth. The essay is adequately organized and supportive of its argument, yet its chronological focus is rather narrow. Although the bulk of the essay is devoted to the post-1985 period, a nod toward the earlier era is provided, as the impact of Khrushchev’s reforms is noted in the introduction. Each of the major problems cited is supported by at least one major piece of evidence.

Sample: 3C

Score: 2

This essay’s thesis is explicit but inaccurate (most of the problems listed are not generally credited with causing the collapse of the Soviet system). The student attempts to address the question but focuses on irrelevant issues (censorship and “collapse by fear”), and is aware of economic problems but presents them in a simplistic manner. The essay fails to effectively link problems within the Soviet Union to the collapse of the Soviet system (although it is accurate about the economic effects of the Cold War). Assertions are generalized and supported with little relevant evidence. Major errors detract from the argument.